Development tool to help strengthen your evaluation practice

Measuring change		
If you are only collecting data from young people through end-of-event questionnaires...	Consider collecting some data from them before or at the beginning of the event so that you have a point of comparison – this can be limited to a single question. If you are collecting before and after data from young people...	Consider collecting data again some period later (maybe three to six months) to see whether any changes in knowledge, attitude or behaviour have remained.
Individualised data collection		
If you are currently using anonymous pre-post questionnaires to measure changes due to an activity...	Consider using identifiers/names to link data and look at individual change. This will enable you to determine effects more rigorously and see what proportion have changed. If you are using linked individual data within pre-post questionnaires...	Consider looking at subgroups (e.g. by gender or ability) within the group to see whether the activity has been more effective for some types of young people than others.
Psychological and sociological concepts		
If you are interested in changes in young people's attitudes...	Consider tying your evaluation to well-established psychological or sociological constructs such as self-efficacy or social capital. If you are using psychological or sociological constructs...	Consider using pre-existing inventories from the research literature as these are likely to have been validated – if none exists, ensure you cognitively test your own.
Collecting data from teachers and parents		
If you are currently relying on gathering evaluative data from young people...	Consider triangulating the self-report data by gathering data from the adults working with the targeted young people, including parents and teachers. If you are currently collecting informal feedback from teachers, parents or other adults working with the targeted young people...	Consider using short telephone interviews – many will prefer this (response rates will be stronger) and you will collect richer data in a more robust way than using questionnaires.
Improving qualitative data collection		
If you are only collecting data from young people through questionnaires...	Consider undertaking focus groups or group interviews with a sample after a period of time has elapsed – this will give them the opportunity to reflect on their experiences. If you are doing group interviews or focus groups with young people...	Consider taking steps to ensure that you have a balanced sample of young people involved and consider using an 'authentic task' exercise to provide additional observational data.
Exploring aspirations		
If the focus of your evaluation is on 'raising aspirations' for HE or similar...	Consider expanding your questions to take in the expectations of the young person, as research suggests these have stronger predictive power. If you are already asking young people about their expectations around higher education...	Consider broadening out the questions to take in what they think their parents and teacher expect, as research suggests that these all have a strong correlation with future behaviour.
Inferential statistical analysis		
If you are using descriptive statistics (e.g. simple percentages) to measure changes in knowledge, attitudes or behaviours...	Consider using inferential statistical testing to determine whether the changes can safely be ascribed to the activity rather than chance – the paired t-test may be appropriate. If you are using inferential statistical tests to evaluate changes in knowledge, attitudes or behaviours...	Consider using multivariate approaches to take into account background variables like gender – ANOVA or regression analysis might be appropriate.
Using experimental designs		
If you are putting a new activity in place or radically changing an existing one...	Consider using a 'natural experiment' to compare groups of young people in the cohorts before and after – if all that has really changed is the activity, you can draw relatively strong conclusions. If you have an activity that is over-subscribed (i.e. more young people applying than spaces available)...	Consider constructing an experimental design comparing those chosen with the others (if they are randomised or the most disadvantaged selected).

Use of this tool is one of the recommendations in the report, 'Evaluation of outreach interventions for under 16 year olds'. Find the full report at:
https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/understanding-the-evaluation-of-access-and-participation-outreach-interventions-for-under-16-year-olds/